

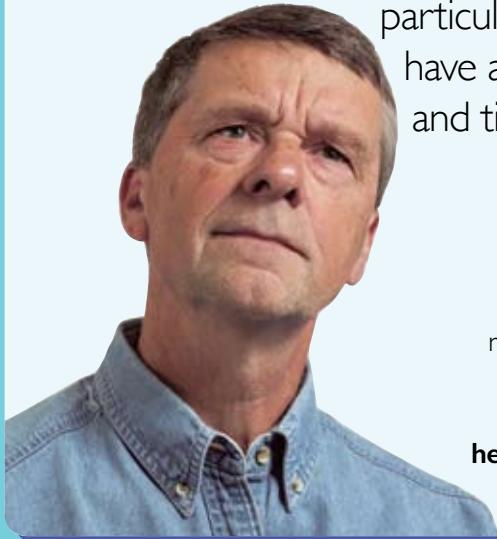
## Penile Cancer information sheet

### Radiotherapy (localised penile cancer)

For further information on life after treatment,  
please refer to Orchid's main booklet:  
Penile Cancer; What you need to know.

**ORCHID**  
FIGHTING MALE CANCER 

Orchid is dedicated to supporting men with a diagnosis of penile cancer. This information sheet describes a particular treatment men may have along with any special care and tips we think may be helpful.



Orchid has a  
**Male Cancer Helpline**

manned by specialist nurses on

**0808 802 0010**

or email

**[helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk](mailto:helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk)**

## **Radiotherapy** (localised penile cancer)

Radiation therapy is the use of high-energy x-rays to kill cancer cells and these can be directed at cancer from outside of the body (external beam radiotherapy) or from within the body (brachytherapy). Both types of radiotherapy can be used to treat penile cancer which is confined to the penis as an alternative to surgery.

### **External beam radiotherapy**

External beam radiotherapy can also sometimes be used to treat other areas of the body that may have been affected by penile cancer.

Before both of these types of radiotherapy are performed the area to be treated will be thoroughly identified by performing scans such as CT and MRI (see Orchid's main booklet: *Penile Cancer; What you need to*

know) and ink marks applied to the target treatment area.

Men will need to be circumcised (the foreskin surgically removed) prior to radiotherapy to reduce the chance of skin swelling and irritation which may affect the penis as a result of treatment.

### **Brachytherapy**

This type of treatment can be used to treat penile cancer which is not greater than 4cm in size and can be performed using two possible methods.

Under a general anaesthetic, radioactive needles are positioned through the penis and small radioactive pellets inserted near to the cancerous areas.

The needles will need to stay in place for up to 7 days and men will have to stay in hospital during this time in a room with limited mobility (bed rest). Children and pregnant

women will not be allowed to visit them. The needles and the catheter will be removed under a general anaesthetic once all the treatment has been given.

To protect the passage of urine from the bladder a urinary catheter will be inserted. (see Catheters section on the next page).

### Plesiobrachytherapy

A special plastic mould is made in the shape of the penis. This can be fitted over the penis and small radioactive wires attached to the penile tissue around the cancerous area. Radiation can then be administered through the wires. This type of treatment can be performed on a daily basis over several days.

### External beam radiotherapy

This treatment involves radiation being beamed at cancer by an external machine. Treatment tends to be given over a six week period in short doses (10-15 minutes). Beams of radiation are directed at the cancer and the dose of radiotherapy given is controlled by a computer.

## Side effects related to radiotherapy treatment

### Fatigue

This may be caused by a combination of both treatment and travel. Getting small restful naps or taking a mild sedative medication may help.

### Skin reactions

Radiotherapy can irritate the sensitive skin around the penis and the blood supply to the penis may be reduced. These symptoms tend to occur 2-3 weeks from starting external beam radiotherapy and 2-3 weeks after brachytherapy.

Vitamin E supplements and topical creams can help the healing process and these may be prescribed by the healthcare team. It is also advisable to keep areas that have been exposed to radiotherapy covered and protected from direct sunlight.

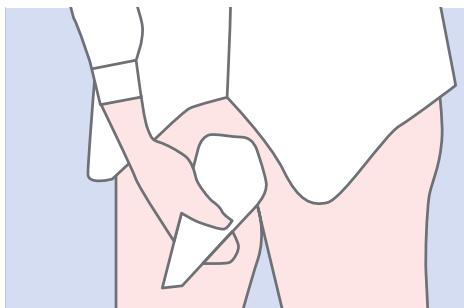
### Problems passing urine

Radiotherapy can sometimes cause the tissue of the penis to become thicker and this can sometimes cause a narrowing or 'stricture' of the urethra and cause the urinary stream to spray.

If this occurs, a minor operation can sometimes be performed to widen the urethra.

Men can also be taught how to widen the urethra using specially designed plastic tubes (urethral dilatation).

There are also several types of disposable urinary funnel which can be purchased (see diagram below). Examples of these can be found on [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk). Similar non-disposable devices are available on



prescription and men should ask their GP or Practice nurse for details of these.

It is also possible to purchase a special key (**RADAR Key**) which allows anyone with a medical condition which has affected their urinary pattern to make use of otherwise locked or inaccessible toilets in the UK. It can

be ordered from Disability Rights for a small fee. ([www.disabilityrightsuk.org/radar-nks-key](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/radar-nks-key) or 020 7250 8191).

A 'Just Can't Wait' toilet card can also be obtained from the Bladder and Bowel Foundation again for a small fee which is universally recognised and may allow men access to toilets in the same way. (<https://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org/just-cant-wait-card-introduction/> or 01926 357220)

## Erection problems

If the blood supply to the penis is reduced as a result of radiotherapy or the tissue has become thicker or less healthy men may find it more difficult to obtain an erection. Sometimes this ability will slowly return as the body heals.

There are several types of treatment that can help men obtain an erection and men should ask their healthcare team about them if they continue to experience difficulties.

## Catheters

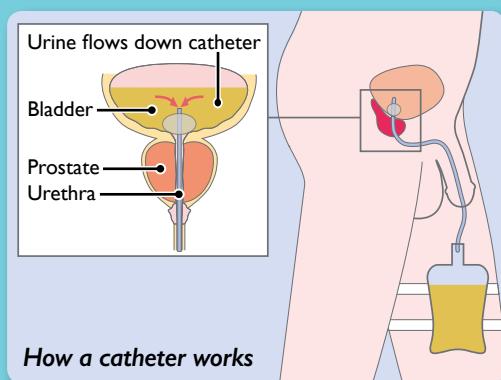
A catheter is a plastic tube that drains urine from the bladder. It will be connected to a leg drainage bag which can be left in place for up to a week. A bigger bag can be attached to the leg bag for drainage at night.

The catheter is held inside the bladder by a small balloon that is inflated with sterile water following insertion. It will therefore not usually come out unless properly removed by deflating the balloon. The balloon tends to rest over a sensitive area of nerves in the bladder which may be affected by its presence and these nerves are connected to nerves in the penile area. This irritation may make a man feel as if he needs to pass urine urgently and sometimes force a small amount of urine from around the catheter. Using a strap or tape to fix the join of the catheter to the thigh or top of the leg to prevent it from pulling or dragging may be of help.

- ▶ Men should clean around the penis as instructed by the specialist team and should

avoid any toiletries which may cause skin irritation and delay the healing process.

- ▶ The catheter should not be pulled or tugged.
- ▶ It is very important to drink 2 - 3 litres of fluid daily to flush the urine through and water based drinks tend to prevent bacteria forming which will help prevent urinary infection.
- ▶ When emptying or connecting catheter bags, hands should always be washed thoroughly with soap and water before and after the procedure.



## Men should seek medical advice from their healthcare team if they experience:

- ▶ Uncontrolled pain.
- ▶ A high temperature and shaking or feeling as if a bad cold is present which could be a sign of infection.
- ▶ Prolonged swelling, redness or a foul smelling discharge around the penis which could indicate localised infection.
- ▶ Difficulty in passing urine.

**PLEASE REFER TO ORCHID'S BOOKLET  
PENILE CANCER; WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW  
FOR FURTHER ADVICE AND ADJUSTING TO LIFE AFTER SURGERY**

## Important contact numbers

Specialist Nurse contact no.:

District Nurse contact no.:

Men always need to make sure that the contact details of the specialist team are at hand should they need to contact them prior to follow-up appointments.

## Resources...

For further information and support on male cancer, please visit the Orchid website at [www.orchid-cancer.org.uk](http://www.orchid-cancer.org.uk)

Orchid has produced a series of leaflets and factsheets on specific issues relating to male cancer which can be downloaded from the website.

**Low-down**, Orchid's newsletter, features the latest news and developments in male cancer including research, treatments, new services and events.

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Orchid Cancer Appeal and  
Orchid Editorial Board

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References to sources of information used in this booklet are available from Orchid. If you would like to comment on the information included in the booklet or make suggestions about future editions Orchid would like to hear your feedback.

Orchid is the UK's leading charity dedicated to supporting men and their families who are affected by male-specific cancers: testicular, prostate and penile.

Established in 1996 by a young testicular cancer patient and the oncologist who saved his life, Orchid works to improve the lives of people affected by male cancers through a world class research programme, educational campaigns and raising awareness and an extensive support service.



### ORCHID

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